



Proposed At-grade Crossings of Officially Recognized Trails

Port MacKenzie Rail Extension Project

1.0 Introduction

On November 21, 2011 the Surface Transportation Board (STB) issued a final decision (Docket No. FD 35095) authorizing the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) to construct and operate approximately 35 miles of new rail line connecting Port MacKenzie to ARRC's existing main line near Houston, Alaska. That decision required ARRC to comply with Mitigation Measure 84, which requires submittal of a report providing specific information for any at-grade crossings that are proposed. This report is submitted in compliance with that mitigation measure.

2.0 Officially Recognized Trails – Mitigation Measure 84

The following trails have been identified in Mitigation Measure 84A as officially recognized:

- Crooked Lake Trail – West Papoose Twins Road (Crossing 7)
- Iditarod National Historic Trail (Crossing 10)
- Flat Lake Connector Trail – Iron Dog Trail (Crossing 5)
- Houston Lake Loop Trail (Crossing 4)
- Big Lake Trail #1 (Crossing 2)
- Big Lake Trail #2 (Crossing 3)
- Big Lake Trail #5 – Iron Dog Connector Trail (Crossing 5)
- Big Lake Trail #14 – Iditarod Race Trail (Crossing 9)

All proposed crossing locations are shown on attached Figure 1. Two trails identified above, Flat Lake Connector Trail and Big Lake Trail #5, are planned to be rerouted under a 5-span bridge at Crossing 5 as discussed in the Iditarod Dog Sledding Historic District (IDSHD) Workshop Summary and Implementation Plan. All other officially recognized trails identified in Mitigation Measure 84A have planned crossing structures.

At-grade crossings are provided for roads and utility corridors currently crossing the alignment, and three share the same alignment as officially recognized trails identified in 84A: Big Lake Trail #1, Big Lake Trail #2, and the Crooked Lake Trail. The crossing specific information below details these crossings per Mitigation Measure 84D.

Most of the comments and recommendations received from trail users for crossings 2 and 3 came from Big Lake Trails, a group consisting primarily of snowmachine users. Crossing 7 is an existing Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB) maintained road that also supports dog mushers and snowmachine traffic. No comments were received that specifically addressed the dual usage of this roadway.

Coordination with trail users on all crossing locations within the project corridor occurred at three IDSHD Dog Mushing Workshops and at a MSB trails open house. Comment summaries from these events are included in the IDSHD Workshop Summary and Implementation Plan. No parties provided substantive objections to proposed safety measures, which will be refined by a Diagnostic Team consistent with Mitigation Measure 60.

3.0 Crossing 2 – Big Lake Trail #1

Big Lake Trail #1 is located in an existing Matanuska Electric Association (MEA) power line license on Knikatnu Corporation lands (Cook Inlet Regional Incorporated [CIRI] owns subsurface rights). An approximately 14-foot wide at-grade crossing with 20-foot crossing panels for the existing access road is planned at this location (refer to Exhibit 1 below). Grade separation is not feasible due to the relatively short distance to Millers Reach Road at-grade crossing and the need for the MEA power lines to cross.

ARRC and MSB (Project Team) has conveyed to trail users and agencies that this is a utility corridor and maintaining access may be challenging. Earlier in the process, the Project Team proposed relocating the trail to cross at the Millers Reach Road location, thereby leaving a gated crossing for MEA's use. The trails community disapproved with this solution due to the heavy use that the trail currently handles. The Project Team has since committed to an at-grade crossing for both trails and MEA use; however, the access will be gated if MEA or the property owner(s) chooses. Trails users will be required to work with MEA or the property owner(s) to ensure continued use and access. The Project Team proposes a reroute to Millers Reach Road in the event this trail access cannot be maintained at the current location. If access is allowed at this location, appropriate signage or signals will be placed on approaches to the crossing consistent with Mitigation Measure 60.

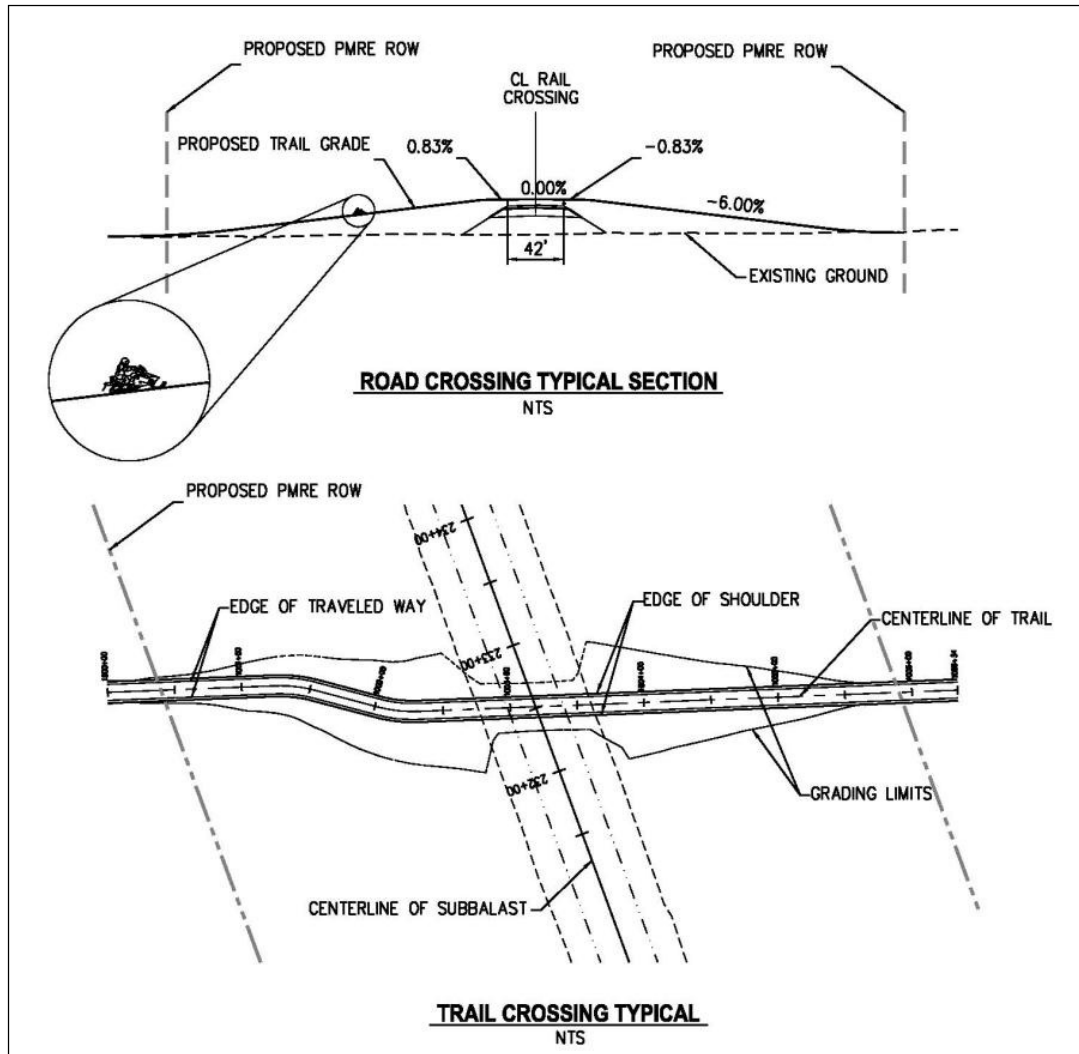


Exhibit 1: Typical at-grade crossing (trail/gravel road)

4.0 Crossing 3 – Big Lake Trail #2

Crossing 3 will include an approximately 32-foot wide at-grade crossing of an unnamed access road to a gravel pad that is currently leased from the Alaska Mental Health Lands Trust (MHLT). The Project Team is working with the MHLT to establish an easement for Big Lake Trail #2 at this existing crossing location; however, trails users will be required to work with easement/property owner(s) to ensure continued use and access. Grade separation is not practicable as the embankment footprint of the raised grade would substantially increase the wetlands fill and associated impact to the large wetland complexes in the area. Exhibit 1 represents a typical crossing for a trail or undeveloped roadway. Exhibit 2 illustrates the existing development at this crossing location. Appropriate signage or signals will be placed on approaches to the crossing consistent with Mitigation Measure 60.

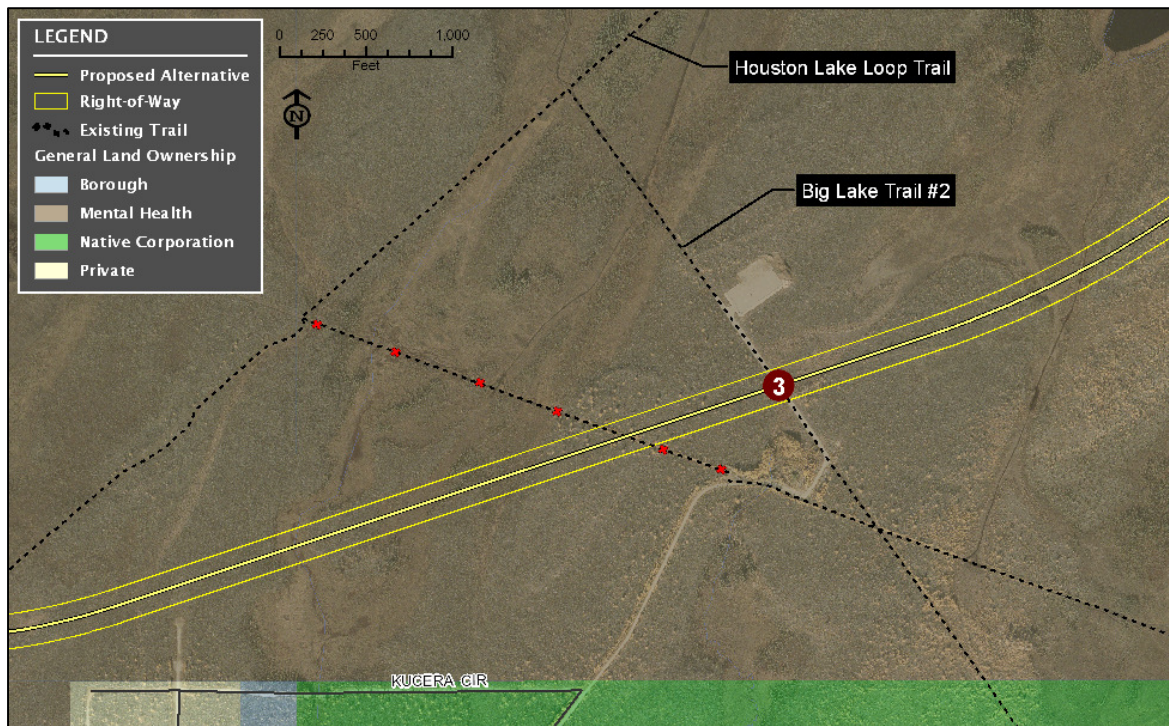


Exhibit 2: Aerial of existing developed gravel drive at Big Lake Trail #2.

5.0 Crossing 7 – West Papoose Twins Road (Crooked Lake Trail)

The crossing of West Papoose Twins Road will be an at-grade crossing with signage or warning devices. This road is frequently used by trail vehicles as it is an extension of the Crooked Lake Trail and access across the tracks would be retained. Exhibit 3 below reflects the proposed at-grade crossing structure including trails both north and south of the roadway, and Exhibit 4 is an aerial view of the crossing location. Currently, trail users and vehicles share the existing road corridor; the Project Team has proposed to provide trails both north and south of West Papoose Twins Road to accommodate trail users. Appropriate signage or signals will be placed on approaches to the crossing consistent with Mitigation Measure 60

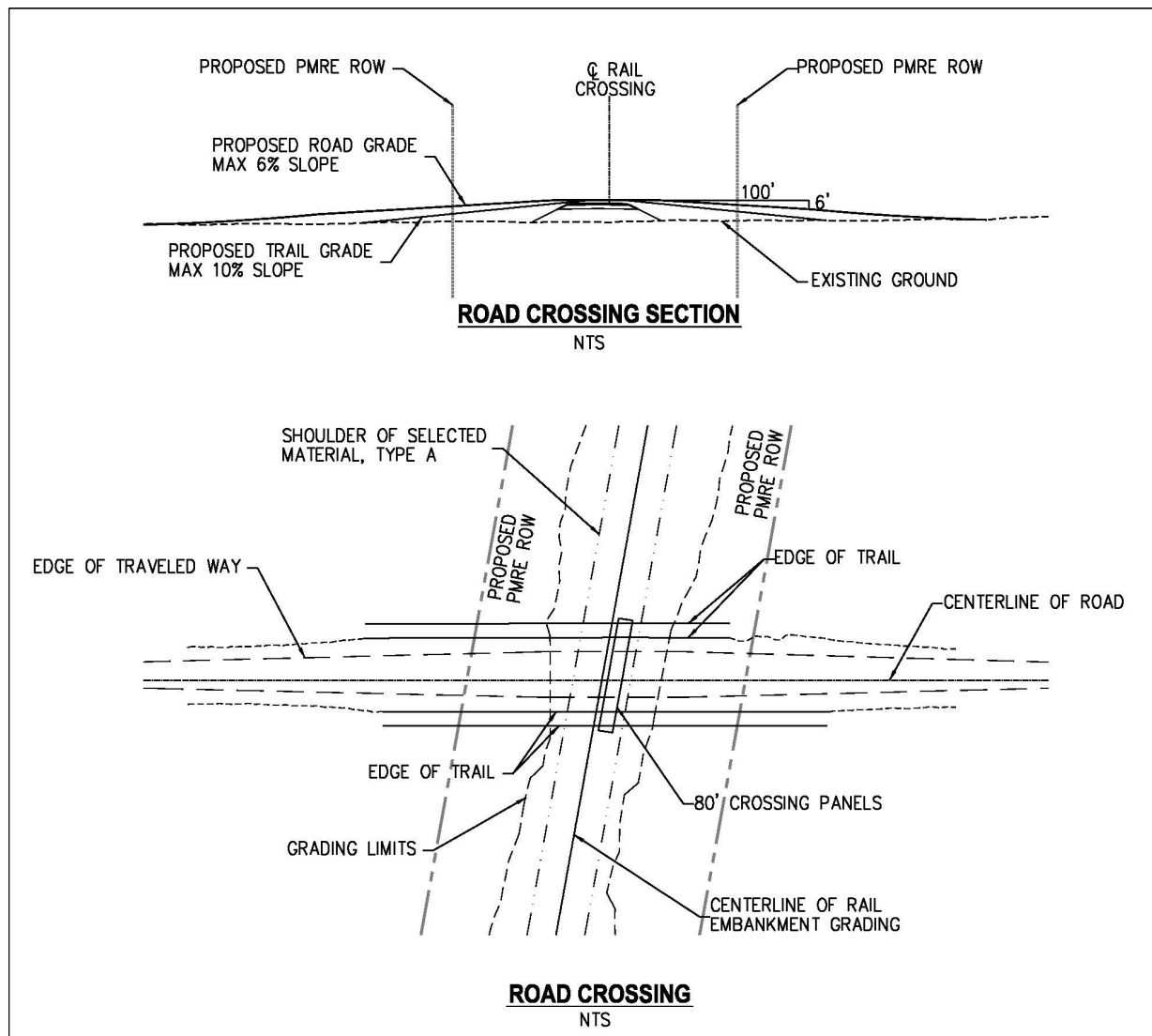


Exhibit 3: Typical at-grade road crossing (parallel trails)



Exhibit 4: Aerial view of West Papoose Twins Road crossing location.

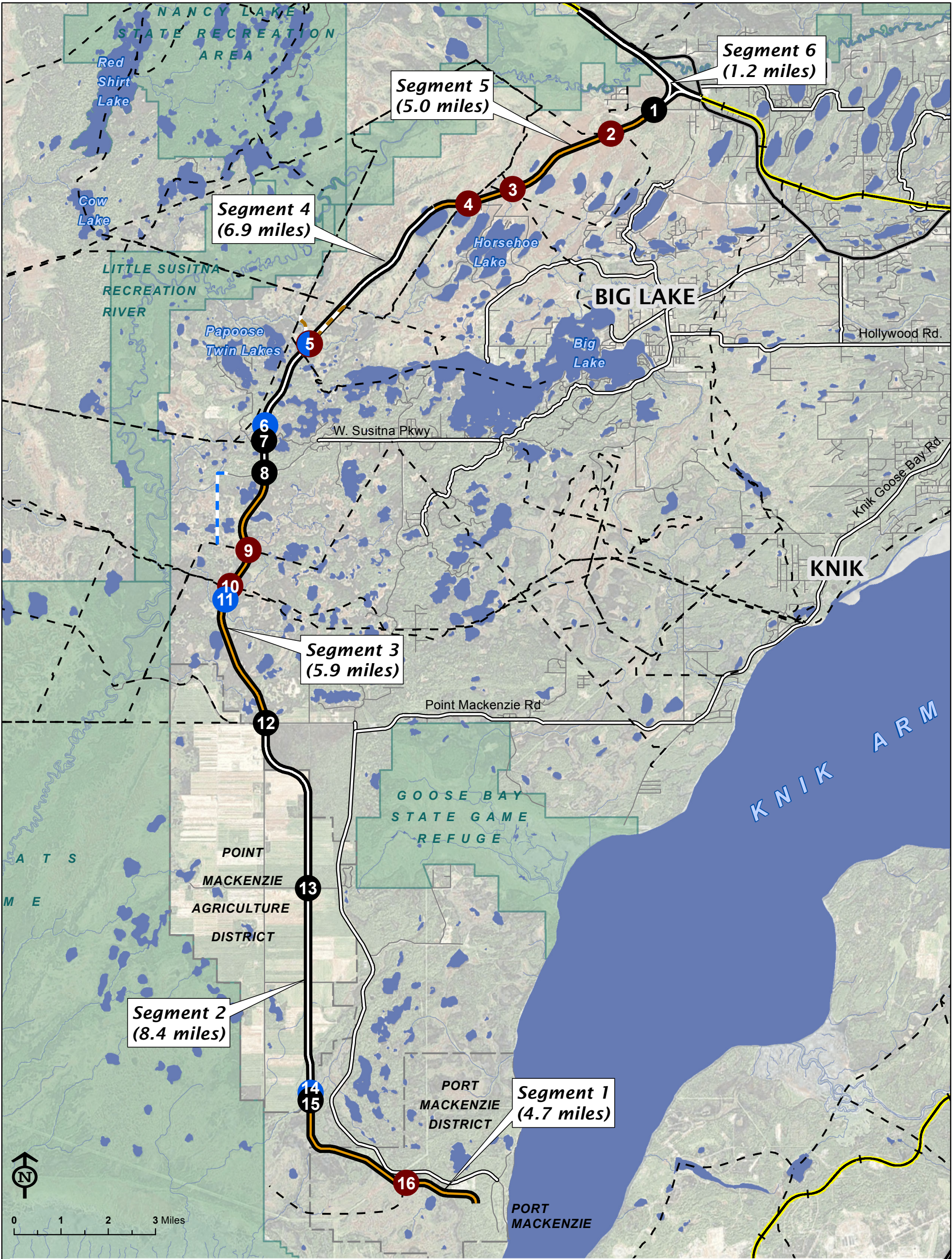


Figure 1: Crossing Locations

- Proposed Alternative
- ARRC Track
- Existing Trail
- New Trail Reroute
- New Trail Connection
- Crossing Types
- Road/Trail
- Trail
- Stream
- Stream/Trail

Crossing Type Summary

1	Millers Reach Rd.	At-Grade	9	Iditarod Race Trail	Bridge
2	Unnamed Big Lake Rec.Trail* <i>Utility Easement (contingent on utility approval)</i>	At-Grade	10	Historic Iditarod Trail	Bridge
3	Unnamed Big Lake Rec.Trail* <i>Private Drive (contingent on owner approval)</i>	At-Grade	11	H-0.8 - outlet of Diamond Lake	Bridge
4	Houston Lake Loop Trail (Crossing)	Bridge	12	W Ayrshire Avenue	At-Grade
5	H-6.3 - Tributary of Little Su	Bridge	13	W Holstein Avenue	At-Grade
6	H-4.3 - Tributary of Little Su	Bridge	14	MC-4.5 - Unnamed Stream	Bridge
7	W Papoose Twins Rd.	At-Grade	15	Baker Farm Road	At-Grade
8	W Susitna Parkway	At-Grade	16	Figure 8 Lake Loop Trail	Oversized Culvert

*If crossing 2 or 3 are not approved by landowner/easement holder, reroutes will be provided to the nearest crossing